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Integrated Country Strategy

Thailand

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Table of Contents

1. Chief of Mission Priorities 1

2. Mission Strategic Framework 2

3. Mission Goals and Objectives 3

4. Management Objectives..... 7

1. Chief of Mission Priorities

Our mission is to promote U.S. interests by energizing the strategic relationship, strengthening the economic partnership, and promoting transparency and good governance. The U.S. relationship with the Kingdom of Thailand remains one of our most important in the Asia Pacific region and has spanned more than two centuries of friendship. We have been diplomatic treaty partners for over 185 years and security treaty allies for 65 years. Our broad cooperation—in the heart of the most dynamic and relevant region for the future of the world’s security and economy—benefits both our countries, the region, and the world beyond.

The U.S.-Thailand relationship covers the full range of political, security, health and economic cooperation. Strategically, we have deep security cooperation and robust military to military relations, encompassing significant joint training and exercises, including the annual Cobra Gold multilateral military exercise, the largest of its kind in Asia. 2021 will mark the fortieth anniversary of Cobra Gold. We also have significant cooperation in law enforcement, with a particular focus on transnational crime and countering narcotics trafficking. We have had over 60 years of cooperation on health matters including through the Armed Forces Research in Medical Sciences and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Our goal is to continue to build on this cooperation by deepening and expanding these ties, which promote regional stability and enable both nations to effectively address complex security concerns, including the protection of U.S. citizens abroad.

Economically, our goal is to expand economic ties by promoting two-way investment and trade. We aim to create business opportunities for U.S. companies while offering an alternative to a state-led approach to development and growth that may leave countries in the Indo-Pacific region saddled with unsustainable debt and more vulnerable to political and economic pressure. We support an open and accessible business climate that adheres to high standards for technology, transparency, and social protections. We continue to advocate policies to help Thailand achieve sustainable growth and professionalize economic policymaking.

The United States supports democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms as essential components of good governance, peace, and prosperity. Throughout the world, including in Thailand, we have consistently encouraged governments to ensure freedom of expression and to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms. We support sound governance that increases public sector accountability and transparency, strengthens anti-corruption measures and promotes honest and open public finance practices.

Sustaining a mission of this size and regional significance continues to present substantial challenges, namely the need for a New Office Annex to support our regional presence.

2. Mission Strategic Framework

Mission Goal 1: Secure the U.S. as Thailand's Preferred Defense and Security Partner.

Mission Objective 1.1: Strengthen Long-term Linkages with Political and Security Institutions and Increase Popular Support for the U.S.-Thai Alliance.

Mission Objective 1.2: Increase the Capacity of Thai Defense and Law Enforcement Institutions to Address Traditional and Non-Traditional Security Challenges.

Mission Objective 1.3: Promote Thai Leadership and Strategic Focus in Regional Venues that Support a Free and Open Indo-Pacific.

Mission Objective 1.4: Protect U.S. Border Security and U.S. citizens in Thailand.

Mission Goal 2: Strengthen the Economic Partnership.

Mission Objective 2.1: Increase Bilateral Trade and Investment.

Mission Objective 2.2: Strengthen Collaboration in Strategic Sectors.

Mission Objective 2.3: Build Shared Prosperity by Encouraging a Regulatory Environment Attractive to U.S. Businesses and Conducive to Expansion.

Mission Goal 3: Promote Rule of Law, Democratic Values, and Global Health.

Mission Objective 3.1: Strengthen Accountability, Public Participation, and Rule of Law in Governing and Political Institutions.

Mission Objective 3.2: Maximize Coordination on the Environment, Transboundary Water, and Other Key Regional/Global Issues.

Mission Objective 3.3: Strengthen Global Health Security Through Education and Outreach.

Management Objective 1: Dramatically expand Mission Thailand's USG-owned physical footprint by constructing a 14-story New Office Annex (NOX) in Bangkok and a New Consulate Compound (NCC) in Chiang Mai, complexes that will benefit the Mission's role as the primary USG hub for Southeast Asia and the Mekong region.

Management Objective 2: Provide modern and secure infrastructure and operational capabilities to support effective diplomacy.

3. Mission Goals and Objectives

Mission Goal 1: Secure the U.S. as Thailand's Preferred Defense and Security Partner.

Description: To protect America's security at home and abroad, Mission Goal 1 will deepen our long-standing security alliance with Thailand and boost the capacity of Thai security institutions to advance our common goal of a free and open Indo-Pacific. This includes strengthening traditional military to military relations, increasing cooperation on non-traditional security threats such as transnational crime, and promoting Thai leadership in regional security institutions. We will also work to promote continued support for the U.S.-Thai alliance both among Thai elites and the population more broadly.

Mission Objective 1.1: Strengthen long-term linkages with political and security institutions and increase popular support for the U.S.-Thai Alliance.

Justification: Our 65-year security partnership with Thailand is a critical component in our ability to protect American security and interests in the Indo-Pacific region.

Linkages: This objective supports the 2017 National Security Strategy, 2018 National Defense Strategy, the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy, the 2017 Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, and the 2019 USINDOPACOM Theater Strategy.

Risks: Failure to demonstrate continued robust U.S. engagement will allow malign narratives to grow unchecked and negatively impact security.

Mission Objective 1.2: Increase the capacity of Thai defense and law enforcement institutions to address traditional and non-traditional security challenges.

Justification: Our allies are both more reliable and more capable when they have the capacity to address their own security challenges. Thailand's ability to deter threats to its sovereignty, including both traditional threats as well as transnational crime and cybercrime, will strengthen the bilateral partnership and make Thailand a more capable partner in addressing threats to U.S. citizens.

Linkages: This objective supports the 2017 National Security Strategy, 2018 National Defense Strategy, the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy Goal 1.3 and 1.4, the 2017 Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, the 2019 USINDOPACOM Theatre Strategy, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2020-2024.

Risks: Weakened security institutions and unchecked transnational criminal activity will erode Thai sovereignty and push Thailand to seek support from other foreign partners.

Mission Objective 1.3: Promote Thai leadership and strategic focus in regional venues that support a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Justification: As the second largest economy in ASEAN and one of only two treaty allies in that body, Thailand can play a key role in advancing our common security interests within Southeast Asia's regional institutions. Whether it's maritime security in the South China Sea; trafficking of drugs, wildlife and people; or malign activities on the Mekong, Thailand can help lead countries in the region to a more robust assertion of their sovereignty while also advancing U.S. policy goals.

Linkages: This objective supports the 2017 National Security Strategy, 2018 National Defense Strategy, the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy Goal 1.4 and 3.2, the 2017 Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, and the 2019 USINDOPACOM Theatre Strategy.

Risks: Absent robust leadership in regional bodies such as ASEAN, the countries of the region will become increasingly vulnerable to third country efforts to undermine their unity and sovereignty, with corresponding negative impacts on U.S. interests.

Mission Objective 1.4: Protect U.S. Border Security and U.S. citizens in Thailand.

Justification: Bilateral law enforcement cooperation, from promoting the health and safety of U.S. citizens, to countering the smuggling of WMDs supports and protects U.S. citizens both in Thailand and at home.

Linkages: This objective supports the 2017 National Security Strategy, 2018 National Defense Strategy, the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy Goal 1.5, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2020-2024.

Risks: Lack of robust engagement with Thai law enforcement would increase risks for both U.S. citizens in Thailand and U.S. national security.

Mission Goal 2: Strengthen the Economic Partnership.

Description: The U.S.-Thai economic partnership undergirds our security alliance and has built prosperity over decades for the citizens of both our countries. As competitors work to expand their economic influence in Thailand, the United States must act to reinforce this foundation built over two centuries of friendly commerce. We will work to deepen trade relations, stimulate demand for U.S. products and services, eliminate barriers that preclude U.S. firms from fair and open competition, and identify commercial opportunities within Thailand that support U.S. jobs and exports. We will play to our strengths by promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in Thailand and collaborating in key sectors including, energy, telecommunications, infrastructure, and higher education. We will work with Thailand to improve the business environment and seek additional opportunities for U.S. companies—and the high standards they bring to bear—to contribute to both our nations' economic growth and prosperity.

Mission Objective 2.1: Increase bilateral trade and investment.

Justification: Trade and investment are core components of the economic ties that have linked the United States and Thailand for over two centuries. Stimulating Thai demand for U.S. products and eliminating technical barriers to trade should help to reduce trade imbalances. Thailand's home-grown companies are increasingly venturing into overseas markets and are an important source of potential investment into the United States.

Linkages: This objective supports the 2017 National Security Strategy, 2018 National Defense Strategy, the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy, the 2017 Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, and the EAP Joint Regional Strategy.

Risks: Failure to expand reciprocal trade expand the trade deficit.

Mission Objective 2.2: Strengthen collaboration in strategic sectors.

Justification: Thailand's economic objectives and the United States Indo-Pacific Strategy are well aligned in sectors including science and technology, energy, transportation infrastructure, telecommunications, and the digital economy. U.S. standards for quality, transparency, and social and environmental protections will ensure that U.S. involvement in these sectors benefits both the United States and Thailand.

Linkages: This objective supports the 2017 National Security Strategy, 2018 National Defense Strategy, the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy, the 2017 Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, and the EAP Joint Regional Strategy.

Risks: Inadequate U.S. investment or incomplete follow through on initiatives would leave nascent projects and emerging opportunities for competitors to seize.

Mission Objective 2.3: Build shared prosperity by encouraging a regulatory environment attractive to U.S. businesses and conducive to expansion.

Justification: U.S. firms thrive in regulatory environments conducive to business and healthy competition, and Thais themselves will benefit from an enhanced business climate. As Thailand improves its regulatory environment, it should be able to attract a larger share of regional supply chains. The United States plays to its strengths when we collaborate on economic growth through market-driven solutions, entrepreneurship, high standards of environmental and social protections, and an ecosystem that promotes innovation.

Linkages: This objective supports the 2017 National Security Strategy, 2018 National Defense Strategy, the 2018-2022 State-USAID Joint Regional Strategy, the 2017 Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy, and the EAP Joint Regional Strategy.

Risks: If reforms aimed at improving the business climate fail to stimulate sufficient growth, Thailand could pivot toward a greater state involvement in the economy, or increase carveouts and protections for state-owned enterprises.

Mission Goal 3: Promote Rule of Law, Democratic Values, and Global Health

Description: The United States will work with the Royal Thai government and civil society partners in support of free, fair, credible, and participatory governance. Developing a stronger partnership with Thailand will result in the enhanced ability to counter non-democratic forces in the region and deter malign influences. This in turn, will strengthen our partnership across the board, whether in security cooperation, trade and investment, or countering transnational crime and global health threats.

Mission Objective 3.1: Strengthen accountability, public participation, and rule of law in governing and political institutions.

Justification: Thailand only recently returned to an elected form of government. Thais continue to seek further reforms to strengthen Thailand's democratic institutions, the rule of law, and human rights. Increasing the capacity of governing and political institutions to ensure participation will enhance the accountability of leaders to their citizens and provide productive channels for Thais to work out political differences.

Linkages: These activities contribute to the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Goal 1: Protect America's Security at Home and Abroad. Supports Goals 2 and 5 of the EAP Joint Regional Strategy. Sustaining shared values advances the objectives set forth in the National Security Strategy and the National Defense Security Strategy. Supports the Indo-Pacific Strategy Pillar 1.

Risks: Failure to consolidate democratic gains and/or return to the contentious politics of the past two decades will both weaken Thailand's ability to partner with us and pose challenges to the U.S.-Thai relationship, potentially providing opportunities for other regional powers.

Mission Objective 3.2: Maximize coordination on the environment, transboundary water, humanitarian and other key regional/global issues.

Justification: Increasing the capacity of Thai organizations through partnerships, technical assistance, and education and exchange programs will help solidify public confidence and productivity of these organizations and their ability to resist outside threats. This will help improve environment protection efforts, protection of marginalized communities and other regional/transboundary issues. Further, Thailand is a regional hub for humanitarian organizations and a transit and destination country for refugees and other vulnerable migrants. By increasing Thailand's capacity and political will to be a humanitarian partner, we can better achieve U.S. goals of protecting vulnerable populations and maintaining U.S. humanitarian leadership throughout Southeast Asia.

Linkages: Supports the National Security Strategy, EAP Regional Strategy, Goal 4 of the EAP Joint Regional Strategy, Goal 5 of the 2018 EAP-USAID Joint Regional Strategy, the 2019 Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) functional bureau strategy, the Indo-Pacific Strategy and 2019 USINDOPACOM Theatre Strategy.

Risks: Participation in efforts to address regional issues could be interpreted as "outsider" interference, undermine credibility of domestic Thai organizations, and could be exploited by media beholden to other regional influencers. Risks to our humanitarian objectives include an

increase in xenophobia (including as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic) or policy shifts to be more inward-facing and security-centric, both of which would make it difficult for Thailand to enact policies more supportive of vulnerable migrants and regional humanitarian initiatives.

Mission Objective 3.3: Strengthen Global Health Security Through Education and Outreach.

Justification: The United States will enhance Thailand's capacity to address biosecurity threats to public health. Healthy populations are more equipped to have sustained and inclusive prosperity. Lack of access to quality health care could lead to political instability and opportunities for other regional powers to step in and provide services, increasing their profile in Thailand.

Linkages: These activities contribute to the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Goal 3: Promote American Leadership and Balanced Engagement, Goals 3 and 4 of the EAP Joint Regional Strategy, and the United States Government Global Health Security Strategy.

Risks: Thailand could see regional suppliers and producers as better able to provide support against health threats at a lower cost, sacrificing quality for quantity.

4. Management Objectives

Management Objective 1: Dramatically expand Mission Thailand's USG-owned physical footprint by constructing a 14-story New Office Annex (NOX) in Bangkok and a New Consulate Compound (NCC) in Chiang Mai, complexes that will benefit the Mission's role as the primary USG hub for Southeast Asia and the Mekong region.

Justification: U.S. Mission Thailand's operations in Bangkok and Chiang Mai have outgrown their current facilities. The construction of NOX Bangkok and NCC Chiang Mai will enable USG agencies to consolidate their presence in each city in secure, modern, compounds on USG-owned properties, allowing the mission to vacate leased office space that does not meet State Department security standards.

Linkages: These activities are linked to the Joint Regional Strategy management objectives of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs and USAID's Bureau for Asia for FY 2019-2021 on providing an administrative platform that enables the mission to effectively pursue US foreign policy interests in the region. They are also linked to the Overseas Building Operations (OBO) Functional Bureau Strategy for FY 2018-2022 and its goal to provide secure, modern facilities for the execution of U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Risks: Projects are delayed by travel restrictions and rigorous entry requirements imposed to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19, which could reduce the migrant work force available in a labor market already strained by very low unemployment rates for skilled construction workers.

Management Objective 2. Provide modern and secure infrastructure and operational capabilities to support effective diplomacy.

Justification: U.S. Mission Thailand provides regional technical and training support for the U.S. diplomatic and consular facilities throughout the Indo-Pacific region. As a regional hub which deploys technicians to neighboring posts, Mission Thailand needs to be at the forefront of State Department advances in mobile computing, security engineering, training and the adoption of new applications to improve employee mobility and productivity.

Linkages: These activities are linked to the U.S. Department of State's Information Technology Strategic Plan for FY 2019-2022 and the Under Secretary for Management's Reimagine Task Force's 2020 objectives to enhance employee productivity and remote work capabilities.

Risks: Restrictions in international travel delay the deployment of technical personnel and equipment needed to implement modernization programs in the region.